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Sports participation, competitiveness, and acceptance of violence in dating relationships among college men and women

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Sports participation, competitiveness, and acceptance of violence in dating relationships among college men and women

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Signatures have been redacted for privacy

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on athletic participation, competitiveness, and win orientation as factors in the acceptability of violence in dating relationships. A sample of 659 male and female undergraduate students were administered a questionnaire containing measures of (1) sports participation, (2) competitiveness, and (3) importance of winning. Participants were also asked to rate the acceptability of violence in a series of vignettes depicting violence between male and female dating partners. Findings suggest that athletic participation and level of competitiveness are not factors in the acceptability of violence in dating relationships for either males or females. However, an individual's desire to win is a predictor of the acceptance of violence in dating relationships for both males and females.

CHAPTER I: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In the two decades following Makepeace's (1981) pioneering work on dating violence, estimates of its prevalence have continued to present a sobering picture of dating and courtship relationships (Neufeld, McNamara, & Ertl, 1999). According to Arias, Samios, and O'Leary (1987), 20 to 66 percent of all college students experience at least one incident of physical violence during a dating relationship. This violence is not strictly confined to one gender, as both men and women are victimized. O' Keefe and Treister (1998) report that 45.5% of males and 43.2% of females have experienced at least one incident of physical aggression from dating partners during the course of their dating relationship. These high prevalence rates, first noted 15 years ago by Roscoe (1985), indicate the degree to which violence in dating continues to be acceptable.

Several factors that may contribute to the acceptance of dating violence have been examined previously. For instance, situational factors such as response to being humiliated by a partner, retaliation to initial violence from a partner, and self-defense have received extensive focus (O'Keefe, 1997; Foo & Margolin, 1995; Arias & Johnson, 1989). Relationship factors such as the seriousness or importance of the dating relationship and length of the relationship have also received attention (Neufeld et al., 1999; O'Keefe, 1997; Bethke & DeJoy, 1993). Still other research has focused on family demographic and other family background influences such as single versus dual parent family of origin and parental violence experienced (Foo & Margolin, 1995; Smith & Williams, 1992).

More recently, studies have examined athletic participation as a factor in the use of violence in contexts other than sports. (Nixon, 1997; Lenzi, Bianco, Milazzo, Placidi, & Castrogiovanni, 1997). A major focus has been on the "spillover theory of violence", which suggests that violence used in sports "spills over" into the interpersonal relationships of the athletes. This theory has been supported in several studies (Bloom & Smith, 1996; Crosset, Ptacek, McDonald, & Benedict, 1996; Crosset, Benedict, & McDonald, 1995).

A critical component of athletes' violent behavior is their belief about the acceptability of the use of violence. This relationship was recently examined by Ellis and Janelle (in press) who found that aggressive behavior both within and outside sports becomes more acceptable as individuals' years of experience in sport increase. The acceptability of violence held by athletes in contexts outside of sports are important to examine in that these accepting attitudes may spillover into interpersonal relationships. It may be that individuals who are accepting of violence in sports may also be accepting of violence in their interpersonal dating relationships.

Thesis Organization

The organization of this thesis includes three separate chapters. Chapter one includes an introduction of the research topic, an extensive review of the literature, as well as a summary section. Chapter two includes a journal paper to be submitted to the Journal of Sport and Social Issues. Chapter three consists of the overall summary of the thesis along with implications and limitations of the study.

Literature Review

Athletic Participation and Acceptance of Violence

One explanation for interpersonal violence is based on the spillover theory. This theory states that violence that is acceptable in some social contexts generalizes to other social contexts where violence may not be as acceptable. The spillover theory is based on the premise that the more a society legitimizes the use of violence to attain ends for which there is widespread social approval, the greater the likelihood that violence will be used for illegitimate ends as well.

In a recent study, Bloom and Smith (1996) tested the spillover theory as it applies to male hockey players and their interpersonal relationships. Their sample consisted of 273 select-league hockey players, 328 house-league hockey players, and a group of 152 non-hockey participants. Select-league hockey is designed for more skilled players and provides the most competitive environment. House-league hockey is designed for players that are less skilled and prefer an environment that is less competitive. House and select players were sampled as a result of stratifying all hockey participants into their respective age-graded playing division, and then randomly selecting players from each stratum. The non-hockey participants were randomly selected from school registrations in six Canadian high schools. Three dependent measures were included in this study: (1) approval of teenage fighting (2) number of physical fights a respondent has been involved in during the last three years while playing other sports besides hockey, and (3) number of physical fights a respondent has been involved in with a family member during the last three years. Results showed that both select- and house-league hockey players were more accepting of teenage fighting than non-hockey participants. Select-league players were also more likely to have been involved in

fights in other sports settings than either house-league players or non-hockey participants. Also, non-hockey participants were less likely to have been involved in a physical fight with a family member than hockey players. These findings provide support for the idea that sports aggression may spillover into interpersonal relationships.

Nixon (1997) examined how participation in sports relates to physical aggression outside of the sport context. His sample consisted of 218 male and female undergraduates enrolled in introductory sociology classes, as well as 195 male and female collegiate student-athletes from a full range of varsity sports. The students enrolled in the introductory sociology classes were given a questionnaire by their instructor and were asked to complete it and return it via mail. Student athletic trainers distributed the same questionnaire to the male and female athletes and they were returned to a box in the athletic training room. Physical aggression was measured by a single item that asked respondents whether they had ever physically harmed or injured another person outside the sport context in a fight or disagreement. The results indicated that in general, there were no differences among male and female college athletes and non-athletes regarding aggression committed outside of sports. However, results showed that male and female collegiate athletes who compete in contact sports were significantly more likely than male and female non-athletes to engage in physically aggressive acts in everyday life.

Lenzi, et al. (1997) conducted a study in Italy that focused on whether participation in sports activities encourages the development of aggressive behavior. Their sample consisted of 33 sportsmen and 43 sportswomen in addition to 230 male and 258 female non-sport participants. The non-sport participants were recruited at random from the general population of individuals under 30 years old. Individuals labeled as sportsmen and sportswomen were

involved in a number of different sports including: volleyball, swimming, judo, and basketball. Aggressive behavior was measured by the Italian version of Buss and Durkee's (1957) Inventory for Assessing Different Kinds of Hostility. In the Buss and Durkee (1957) inventory, direct aggression refers to physical violence against others, which includes getting into fights with others. The results of this study indicated that sportswomen exhibit a higher level of direct aggression than women who do not practice sport. There were no differences in direct aggression among sportsmen and men who do not participate in sports.

Many sports activities besides hockey create environments that are conducive to aggressive behavior, environments in which the use of violence is expected, encouraged, and rewarded (Messner, 1990). For instance, Crosset, et al. (1995) examined the relationship between men's participation in collegiate athletics and reported sexual assaults at college campuses. The participants in this study were collegiate athletes and non-athletes from division I institutions, representing such sports as football and basketball. Data regarding reported sexual assaults was based on police records at 20 college institutions as well as the records of 10 judicial affairs offices on campuses over a 3-year period. The results of this study showed that male collegiate athletes were over-represented in the number of sexual assaults reported to college judicial affairs offices, but not in the number of assaults reported to campus police.

In a follow-up study, Crosset, et al. (1996) investigated the relationship between male collegiate athletic participation and physical violence against women. A total of 10 Division I institutions provided data based on reported incidences of battering obtained from judicial affairs offices over a 3-year period. The results indicate an association between athletic participation and reported incidences of battering. During the 3-year period, individuals that

participated in collegiate athletics comprised only 3% of the entire campus male population but were perpetrators in 35% of the reported cases of battering of women.

More recently, research has focused on a critical component underlying athletes' violent behavior in relationships: athletes' beliefs about the acceptability of the use of violence. Ellis and Janelle (in press) examined legitimacy and acceptability ratings of aggressive acts within and outside the sport context of both male and female Division I athletes and non-athletes. A total of 66 (31 male and 35 female) university students enrolled in courses in the Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences as well as members of several varsity collegiate teams comprised the sample. Non-athletes in this sample were individuals who were not members of intercollegiate athletic teams, and had not participated in organized sports during or beyond the high school level. Legitimacy and acceptability of violence were measured through a series of 28 video clips that presented assertive and aggressive behavior within sports and outside the sport context. An example of an aggressive behavior within sports included a professional baseball pitcher hitting a batter on the arm with a pitch. An example of an aggressive behavior outside of sports was a female spitting on another female. Participants were asked to determine whether the acts depicted in the video clips were legitimate and to rate how acceptable the behavior was in each clip. The results of this study show that the acceptance of aggressive behavior in sports increases as the years of experience in sport increases. In other words, the longer an individual participates in sport, the more accepting they become towards aggression within and outside sport.

These findings suggest that along with aggression, beliefs about the acceptability of aggression also may spillover into everyday life situations for individuals engaged in athletics. As the use of violence becomes normalized in an athlete's life due to its

acceptability it may also become more acceptable to use it in interpersonal relationships. This discussion suggests the first hypothesis of this study: individuals with higher levels of athletic participation will consider acts of physical aggression in dating relationships to be more acceptable than those who are less involved.

However, participation in athletics by itself may not be the only influence on an individual's beliefs about the acceptability of violence. More important than participation *per se* may be certain factors associated with athletic participation. One of the most important of these factors is competitiveness.

Competitiveness

Many consider competitiveness to be the core motivating factor underlying athletic participation. There are two major points of view about competitiveness. According to sports psychologists, competitiveness is defined in terms of the attitudes and behavior that are specific to a given environment, the sport context (Fabian & Ross, 1984). In essence, sports psychologists consider competitiveness to be situation specific, confined to sporting activities (Houston, Carter, & Smither, 1997). From this perspective, competitiveness is typically viewed as the desire to enter and strive for success in sports activities (Gill & Deeter, 1988).

The other view of competitiveness is offered by behavioral scientists, who view competitiveness as an enduring and stable personality trait that goes well beyond the context of sports. Tracy (1991) goes so far as to suggest that competitiveness is an important component of our society, and that its occurrence is inevitable between people. Although viewed by behavioral scientists as an integral part of society, competitiveness is not necessarily viewed in a positive light. Kohn (1986) suggests that competitiveness is a dysfunctional behavioral pattern that leads to consequences that may be destructive to

individuals. The behaviorists' view of competitiveness suggests that not only might competitiveness and aggression be related in sports but outside the sport context as well. This includes the potential influence of competitiveness on violence in interpersonal relationships.

Cashdan (1998) examined the use of competitive tactics used by men and women in the context of everyday interactions with others. The sample included 111 female and 119 male college students. They responded to a questionnaire as well as to other questions to which they responded in a written diary. Information obtained from participants included what their competition was about as well as how it was expressed (what tactics do individuals use to express their competitiveness). The results of this study showed that physical aggression is a frequently used tactic to express competitiveness both within and outside sports.

In a study previously discussed, Bloom and Smith (1996) characterized select-league hockey players as having a higher level of competitiveness than either house-league players or non-participants. They found that the select-league hockey players (classified as being the most competitive of the two groups) were more likely to approve of violence both in sports and outside of the sport context than the less competitive house-league players and non-participants. Their findings suggest that the competitiveness of individuals may result in an increased approval of physical violence outside the sport context.

In conclusion, competitiveness may be confounded with athletic participation in previous studies of the relationship between sports participation and violence. Violence in sport may be a reflection of the intensity of the competitiveness that athletes bring to the sport in which they participate, not just a result of participation. Violence in the interpersonal relationships of these individuals may also be a reflection more of their competitiveness than

their athletic participation. In conclusion, it may be competitiveness, rather than athletic participation *per se*, that is the critical factor in the relationship between sports and violence in dating relationships.

However, conceptualizing competitiveness as a unidimensional construct may be an oversimplification. Several researchers have suggested that competitiveness may actually consist of two dimensions: For instance, according to Gill and Deeter (1988) one dimension of competitiveness reflects a desire to enter an activity and strive for success, regardless of who wins. They term this dimension "competitiveness." In contrast, they identify a second dimension that they term "win orientation", the desire to win or avoid losing in participatory activities. These two dimensions are distinct. For instance, some individuals who have strong desires to strive for excellence in sports activities they enter (competitiveness) may not attach much importance to winning (win orientation). Other individuals may be less competitive but have a high need to win, perhaps engaging in only activities where they are assured they will not lose.

In one of the few studies focusing on the need to win, Gill and Dzewaltowski (1988) examined the achievement orientations of intercollegiate athletes from a Division I university. A total of 106 non-athletes and 100 Division I athletes representing sports such as softball, swimming, baseball, wrestling, cross-country, track, and gymnastics were given a packet that contained two different questionnaires assessing attitudes about sports participation. Included in the first, the Sport Orientation Questionnaire (SOQ), were questions that assessed an individual's level of competitiveness and their need to win. The second, the Vealey's Competitive Orientation Inventory (COI), assessed (1) the importance of performing well (performance) in sports activities as well as the importance of winning

(outcome). Results showed that athletes scored higher on the COI performance (competitiveness) emphasis than did the non-athletes. However, there were no differences between athletes and non-athletes on outcome (importance of winning) scores. In other words, having a high level of competitiveness does not necessarily mean that an individual has only a very narrow focus on winning. More important may be the enjoyment of using ones skills, and the appreciation of the skills of those with who is competing. The process itself is the source of satisfaction—who wins may be secondary, even irrelevant.

Ryckman and his colleagues have also identified two dimensions of competitiveness. Their concept of personal development competitiveness is defined as an attitude in which the primary focus is not on the outcome or the desire to win but instead on the enjoyment or mastery of the task (Ryckman and Hamel, 1992). This concept of competitiveness is similar to that of Gill and Deeter's (1988). Both emphasize one's desire to do one's best and strive for success, without emphasis on the outcome of winning or defeating another person.

Ryckman, Hammer, Kaczor, and Gold (1996) conducted a study focusing on personal development competition orientation and another dimension of competitiveness, called hypercompetitiveness. Their definition of hypercompetitiveness stems from Horney's (1937) original definition of hypercompetitiveness as an individuals's need to win at any cost and avoid losing. Using a sample that consisted of 67 female and 26 male undergraduate students enrolled in introductory psychology courses, individuals were given a series of instruments to respond to while in large classrooms. Included were the Hypercompetitiveness Attitude Scale (HCA) and the Aggression scale (AGG) of the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule. The HCA is a 26-item instrument that examines individual differences in hypercompetitive attitudes. The AGG is a 9-item scale that measures aggressiveness in the form of things such

as getting revenge for insults and telling others off when disagreeing with them. The results of this study showed that individuals who were high in hypercompetitiveness were also more aggressive. On the other hand, personal development competitiveness was unrelated to aggression. The fact that personal development competitiveness scores were unrelated to scores of hypercompetitiveness supports the claim that the constructs of hypercompetitiveness and personal development competitiveness are independent of each other.

Ryckman, Libby, van den Borne, Gold, and Lindner (1997) examined the value systems of both personal development competitive and hypercompetitive individuals. A total of 108 undergraduate students enrolled in introductory psychology courses participated in the study. Participants met in a large lecture hall where they were given packets of questionnaires. Included among these was the Schwartz's value survey. This survey consists of several sub-scales including the power subscale, a 5-item measure of the need for social power (i.e. the need to dominant or control others). Another instrument included in the packet was the Hypercompetitive Attitude (HCA) Scale. The results of this study suggest that both personal development competitive and hypercompetitive individuals hold the similar attitude of working hard to achieve personal success. However, only hypercompetitive individuals endorse the attitude of domination and control of others and are less concerned over the welfare of others. Personal development competitors on the other hand were found to be concerned with the welfare and feelings of others and report the need to work cooperatively with others.

Morey and Gerber (1995) differentiated between two types of competitiveness: goal competitiveness and interpersonal competitiveness. Goal competitiveness is defined as one's

desire to be and do their best and to excel. This definition is consistent with that of Gill and Deeter's (1988) concept of competitiveness as well as with Ryckman and Hamel's (1992) concept of personal development competitiveness. Morey and Gerber's concept of interpersonal competitiveness is defined as one's desire to do better than others and to win or defeat others and is congruent with Horney's (1937) concept of hypercompetitiveness and Gill and Deeter's (1988) concept of win orientation. In their study, Morey and Gerber (1995) examined the impact of both goal competitiveness and interpersonal competitiveness on the perceived interpersonal attractiveness by men and women. Results of their study showed that individuals high in goal competitiveness were perceived as more attractive in terms of their success, family orientation, intelligence, and likeableness. In contrast, interpersonal competitiveness was perceived as diminishing the interpersonal attractiveness of an individual in the areas of family orientation and likeableness. Their results support the idea that goal competitiveness and interpersonal competitiveness have different effects on the perceived interpersonal attractiveness of others.

These studies highlight the importance of separating the dimensions of competitiveness that reflect a need to win and avoid losing from dimensions of competitiveness that reflect striving for success. This may be particularly important in the study of the relationship between sports involvement and interpersonal violence. Confounding striving for success with the attitude that one must win at all costs may lead to inaccurate generalizations regarding competitiveness and interpersonal violence. Rather than a general concept of competitiveness, it may be that the level of importance an individual attaches to winning and not losing is the major factor associated with aggressive behavior inside and outside the sport context.

This idea has support from Lance and Ross's (1990) study that examined the perceptions of violence in sports. The participants in this study were 176 males and 24 female intramural sports participants from a metropolitan university. Participants responded to a four-page questionnaire which addressed the following: participants' background, participants' perceptions about violence in sports, participants' perceptions of violence in intramural sports, and participants' participation in intramural sports. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement to the items regarding violence in intramural sports. The results of this study showed that approximately 50 percent of intramural athletes perceived that the desire to win leads to violence. Lance and Ross (1990) concluded that violence has a high probability of taking place when its use constitutes the difference between winning and losing.

The above discussion examines competitiveness as a broad construct that may consist of two separate dimensions. One dimension of competitiveness is defined as the desire to strive for success, without any focus on winning. This dimension of competitiveness has not been a strong factor associated with violence outside of sports. Based on Gill and Deeter's (1988) definition of competitiveness as the desire to enter and strive for success in participatory activities, the following hypothesis is proposed: individuals who are more competitive in participatory activities will not rate acts of violence in dating relationships to be more acceptable than individuals who are less competitive.

The discussion also suggests that when faced with the prospect of losing, individuals with a high need to win may be more likely to use aggression as a means to achieve their end, which is to win. This notion may also hold true for the relationship between win orientation and violence in intimate relationships. The attitude of "winning at all costs" in the sports

arena could spillover into the context of dating relationships, including winning an argument with ones partner and "winning" in having ones way. Based on the above discussion, it is hypothesized that individuals who are highly win-oriented in participatory activities will rate acts of violence in dating relationships to be more acceptable than individuals who are less win-oriented.

Gender and Acceptance of Violence

An additional factor that may influence the acceptability of violence in dating relationships is gender. In a study reviewed above, Nixon (1997) found that male athletes were more likely than female athletes to engage in physically aggressive acts in everyday life outside the sport context. Lenzi et al. (1997), also discussed previously, compared the aggressive behavior of male and female participants and non-participants in sports. They found that men have higher mean scores than women on the sub-scale of direct aggression. Mean scores of sportsmen on the direct aggression sub-scale, although not at the level of statistical significance, were also higher than those of sportswomen. Ellis and Janelle (in press), also reviewed previously, found that males rate aggressive behavior outside a sport context to be more acceptable than do females.

O'Keefe (1997) examined gender as a predictor of the acceptance of dating violence, using a Justification of Violence Scale adapted from a scale developed by Margolin and Foo (1992). Participants were asked to rate the acceptability of male to female violence as well as female to male violence in eight different dating scenarios. The sample consisted of 1,012 male and female high school students. Results of this study showed that males were more accepting of male perpetrated interpersonal violence than were females.

The influence of gender will also be explored in this study of the acceptability of violence in dating relationships. It is hypothesized that males will rate acts of physical aggression in a dating relationship to be more acceptable than females.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between sport participation, competitiveness, win orientation and acceptability of dating violence among college students. Research has suggested that athletic participation is a factor that may contribute to the acceptability of dating violence. According to spillover theory, the acceptability of violence or aggression that is condoned in sports may spillover to other contexts, including the context of interpersonal dating relationships.

However, it may not be athletic participation *per se* that is related to acceptability of violence, but the competitiveness that is associated with athletic participation. Competitiveness is often expressed through aggression towards others in sporting contexts. The spillover theory suggests that competitiveness may also be expressed through aggression in interpersonal relations.

Previous research suggests that competitiveness includes two distinct dimensions. One dimension of competitiveness is defined as the desire to strive for success, without any focus on winning. This dimension of competitiveness has not been a strong factor associated with violence outside of sports. Individuals who possess this dimension of competitiveness may not have a strong need to display aggression within or outside of sports.

The other dimension, an individual's desire to win, may be the most important factor to examine in regards to athletic participation and violence. Although several studies have shown strong relationships between win orientation and violence in and outside sports, the

influence of ones orientation towards winning on the acceptability of violence has not been previously examined. As previous research has shown, the importance of winning in sports contexts often prompts individuals to use aggression towards others to achieve this goal. It seems logical to assume that a strong win orientation would be associated with greater acceptability of violence as well. The current study will also examine win orientation as a factor in the acceptability of violence in the context of dating relationships.

Gender as well may be an important influence on the acceptability of violence in dating relationships. Previous studies have shown males to be more accepting of violence in and outside the sport context than women. The influence of gender on the acceptability of violence in dating relationships will be examined in this study.

Based on the preceding discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. Individuals with higher levels of athletic participation will consider acts of physical aggression in dating relationships to be more acceptable than those with lower levels of athletic participation.
2. Individuals who are more competitive will not rate acts of violence in dating relationships to be more acceptable than individuals who are less competitive.
3. Individuals who are more highly win-oriented will rate acts of violence in dating relationships to be more acceptable than individuals who are less highly win oriented.
4. Males will rate acts of physical aggression in dating relationships to be more acceptable than will females.

CHAPTER 2. SPORTS PARTICIPATION, COMPETITIVENESS, AND ACCEPTANCE OF VIOLENCE IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG COLLEGE MEN AND WOMEN

A paper to be submitted to the Journal of Sport and Social Issues

Michael Merten and Craig Allen

Abstract

This study focuses on athletic participation, competitiveness, and win orientation as factors in the acceptability of violence in dating relationships. A sample of 659 male and female undergraduate students were administered a questionnaire containing measures of (1) sports participation, (2) competitiveness, and (3) importance of winning. Participants were also asked to rate the acceptability of violence in a series of vignettes depicting violence between male and female dating partners. Findings suggest that athletic participation and level of competitiveness are not factors in the acceptability of violence in dating relationships for either males or females. Rather, it is an individual's desire to win that predicts the acceptance of violence in dating relationships for both males and females.

Background

In the two decades following Makepeace's (1981) pioneering work on dating violence, estimates of its prevalence have continued to present a sobering picture of dating and courtship relationships (Neufeld, McNamara, & Ertl, 1999). According to Arias, Samios, and O'Leary (1987), 20 to 66 percent of all college students experience at least one incident of physical violence during a dating relationship. This violence is not strictly confined to one gender, as both men and women are victimized. O' Keefe and Treister (1998) report that 45.5% of males and 43.2% of females have experienced at least one incident of physical aggression from dating partners during the course of their dating relationship. These high prevalence rates, first noted 15 years ago by Roscoe (1985), indicate the degree to which violence in dating continues to be acceptable.

Several factors that may contribute to the acceptance of dating violence have been examined previously. For instance, situational factors such as response to being humiliated by a partner, retaliation to initial violence from a partner, and self-defense have received extensive focus (O'Keefe, 1997; Foo & Margolin, 1995; Arias & Johnson, 1989). Relationship factors such as the seriousness or importance of the dating relationship and length of the relationship have also received attention (Neufeld et al., 1999; O'Keefe, 1997; Bethke & DeJoy, 1993). Still other research has focused on family demographic and other family background influences such as single versus dual parent family of origin and parental violence experienced (Foo & Margolin, 1995; Smith & Williams, 1992).

More recently, studies have examined athletic participation as a factor in the use of violence in contexts other than sports. (Nixon, 1997; Lenzi, Bianco, Milazzo, Placidi, & Castrogiovanni, 1997). A major focus has been on the "spillover theory of violence", which

suggests that violence used in sports "spills over" into the interpersonal relationships of the athletes. This theory has been supported in several studies (Bloom & Smith, 1996; Crosset, Ptacek, McDonald, & Benedict, 1996; Crosset, Benedict, & McDonald, 1995).

A critical component of athletes' violent behavior is their belief about the acceptability of the use of violence. This relationship was recently examined by Ellis and Janelle (in press) who found that aggressive behavior both within and outside sports becomes more acceptable as individuals' years of experience in sport increase. The acceptability of violence held by athletes in contexts outside of sports are important to examine in that these accepting attitudes may spillover into interpersonal relationships. It may be that individuals who are accepting of violence in sports may also be accepting of violence in their interpersonal dating relationships.

However, participation in athletics by itself may not be the only influence on an individual's beliefs about the acceptability of violence. More important than participation *per se* may be certain factors associated with athletic participation. One of the most important of these factors is competitiveness.

Many consider competitiveness to be the core motivating factor underlying athletic participation. There are two major points of view about competitiveness. According to sports psychologists, competitiveness is defined in terms of the attitudes and behavior that are specific to a given environment, the sport context (Fabian & Ross, 1984). In essence, sports psychologists consider competitiveness to be situation specific, confined to sporting activities (Houston, Carter, & Smither, 1997). From this perspective, competitiveness is typically viewed as the desire to enter and strive for success in sports activities (Gill & Deeter, 1988).

The other view of competitiveness is offered by behavioral scientists, who view competitiveness as an enduring and stable personality trait that goes well beyond the context of sports. Tracy (1991) goes so far as to suggest that competitiveness is an important component of our society, and that its occurrence is inevitable between people. Thus, competitiveness is a trait that not only is present during sporting activities but also is present in contexts away from sports (Cashdan, 1998).

Although viewed by behavioral scientists as an integral part of society, competitiveness is not necessarily viewed in a positive light. Kohn (1986) suggests that competitiveness is a dysfunctional behavioral pattern that leads to consequences that may be destructive to individuals. The behaviorist view of competitiveness suggests that not only might competitiveness and aggression be related in sports but outside the sport context as well (Bloom & Smith, 1996). This includes the potential influence of competitiveness on violence in interpersonal relationships.

However, conceptualizing competitiveness as a unidimensional construct may be an oversimplification. Several researchers have suggested that competitiveness may actually consist of two dimensions. According to Gill and Deeter (1988), one dimension of competitiveness reflects a desire to enter an activity and strive for success, regardless of who wins. In contrast, they identify a second dimension that they term "win orientation" as the desire to win or avoid losing in participatory activities. These two dimensions are distinct. For instance, some individuals who have strong desires to strive for success in sports activities they enter (competitiveness) may not attach much importance to winning (win orientation). Other individuals may be less competitive but have a high need to win, perhaps engaging in only activities where they are assured they will not lose.

Ryckman and Hamel's (1992) concept of personal development competitiveness is defined as an attitude in which the primary focus is not on the outcome or the desire to win but instead on the enjoyment or mastery of the task. This definition of competitiveness is similar to that of Gill and Deeter's (1988) definition in that both definitions emphasize one's desire to do their best and strive for success, without an emphasis on the outcome of winning or defeating another person. A number of studies have examined the concept of personal development competitiveness and a separate construct originated by Horney (1937) known as hypercompetitiveness (Ryckman, Hammer, Kaczor, and Gold, 1996; Ryckman, Libby, van den Borne, Gold, and Lindner, 1997). Hypercompetitiveness is defined as the need of individuals to win at any cost and avoid losing.

Morey and Gerber (1995) differentiate between two types of competitiveness: goal competitiveness and interpersonal competitiveness. Goal competitiveness is defined as one's desire to be and do their best and to excel. This definition is consistent with that of Gill and Deeter's (1988) concept of competitiveness as well as with Ryckman and Hamel's (1992) concept of personal development competitiveness. Morey and Gerber's (1995) concept of interpersonal competitiveness is defined as one's desire to do better than others and to win or defeat others and is congruent with Horney's (1937) concept of hypercompetitiveness and Gill and Deeter's (1988) concept of win orientation.

These studies highlight the importance of separating dimensions of competitiveness that reflect a need to win and avoid losing from dimensions of competitiveness that reflect striving for success. This may be particularly important in the study of the relationship between sports involvement and interpersonal violence. Confounding striving for success with the attitude that one must win at all costs may lead to inaccurate generalizations

regarding competitiveness and interpersonal violence. Rather than a general concept of competitiveness, it may be that the level of importance an individual attaches to winning and not losing that is the major factor associated with aggressive behavior inside and outside the sport context.

An additional factor that may influence the acceptability of violence in dating relationships is gender. Previous studies have shown males to be more aggressive than females (Nixon, 1997; Lenzi et al., 1997). In terms of how others perceive violence, previous studies have also shown males to be more accepting of violence both within and outside the sport context than females (Conroy, Silva, Newcomer, Walker, & Johnson, 2001; Ellis & Janelle, in press; Foo & Margolin, 1995). The influence of gender on the acceptability of violence in dating relationships will also be examined in this study.

The following hypotheses will be examined in the current study:

1. Individuals with higher levels of athletic participation will consider acts of physical aggression in dating relationships to be more acceptable than those with lower levels of athletic participation.
2. Individuals who are more competitive will not rate acts of violence in dating relationships to be more acceptable than individuals who are less competitive.
3. Individuals who are highly win-oriented will rate acts of violence in dating relationships to be more acceptable than individuals who are less win oriented.
4. Males will rate acts of physical aggression in dating relationships to be more acceptable than females.

Method

Sample and Procedure

Participants in this study consisted of 266 male and 393 female undergraduate students at a large public university in the Midwestern United States. Students enrolled in any one of three classes in the human development and family studies department or one course in agronomy completed a 51-item questionnaire regarding attitudes about the acceptability of violence in dating and marital relationships, and attitudes about competitiveness and about the desire to win. Questions were also included about participation in high school and collegiate athletics along with others asking for demographic information. A modified consent form was followed and questionnaires were distributed during class.

Measures

Acceptability of Violence. Acceptability of violence in dating relationships was assessed using a set of 18 vignettes that depicted situations involving violence between dating partners. These varied along three dimensions: cross-gender combination of the initiator and recipient of violence, severity of initiator's act, and severity of the recipient's response. Two cross-gender combinations were possible: male as initiator and female as recipient of violence or female as initiator and male as recipient of violence. Severity of initiator's act consisted of three categories: low (yelling at partner), moderate (pushing/shoving partner), and high (punching in arm/hitting partner in the back). Severity of recipient's response was categorized as: moderate (pushing/shoving partner); high (punching in arm/hitting partner in the back); and very high (kicking partner in stomach/punching partner in the face). Within each dating scenario the recipient's response to the initiator's

violence was at the same level or higher than the level of the initiator's action. Four different sets of 9 vignettes each were created and each respondent received one of the four sets. The respondents were asked to read each vignette and indicate how acceptable they believed a particular individual's response was to the violence depicted. The responses ranged from 1 (totally acceptable) to 6 (totally unacceptable). An acceptability of violence score was computed for each individual by averaging across the nine vignette scores. Cronbach's alpha for the 18 vignettes administered in this study was .80.

Competitiveness and Win Orientation. The Sport Orientation Questionnaire (SOQ) developed by Gill and Deeter (1988) was used to measure level of competitiveness and importance of winning in participatory activities. The SOQ contains three separate sub-scales: competitiveness, win orientation, and goal orientation (the goal orientation subscale was not used in this study). Each five-category item in the index ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Scores for each subscale are derived by summing across their respective items. The 13-item competitiveness subscale measure's an individual's desire to enter and strive for success in a participatory activity. This scale includes such items such as: "I thrive on competition" and "I look forward to competing." The win orientation subscale consists of 6 items measuring an individual's desire to win. Examples of items for this sub-scale include: "I hate to lose" and "The only time I am satisfied is when I win." Cronbach's alpha for the 25-item SOQ administered in this study was .95; alpha coefficients for the competitiveness and win orientation sub-scales were .94 and 86, respectively. These reliability coefficients compare favorably to reliabilities for the SOQ in previous studies (Gill & Deeter, 1988; Wartenberg & McCutcheon, 1998).

Athletic Participation. Respondents' participation in high school and collegiate athletics was assessed using a series of seven questions. These focused on the number of years in which individuals had participated in high school athletics, the number of high school sports they had participated in, and the favorite high school sport in which they had participated. In addition, individuals were asked whether they were presently participating in intramural or Division I athletics. The athletic participation index developed for this study consisted of seven categories, ranging from 1 = "No participation" to 7 = "Participation in a Divison I sport" (see Table 2).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The sample is predominantly White (91%); other ethnicities included African-American (2%), Asian American (2%), Hispanic/Latino (1%), and Other (4%). Class standing consisted of Freshmen (19%), Sophomores (21%), Juniors (21%), and Seniors (39%). In regards to current relationship status, approximately 40% of the respondents indicated they were not currently in a dating or marital relationship, 22% were in a current relationship of between one month and one year in length, 19% were in a current relationship of 1-2 years duration, 16% were in a current relationship of 2-5 years duration, and 4% of the sample were in a current relationship of over 5 years duration (see Table 1).

Insert Table 1

Table 2 displays athletic characteristics of the participants in the current study. Over 70% of males and almost 60% of females report participation in a sport during their senior

year in high school. About 60% of the males and 50% of the females who reported any sports participation indicated team-only as their favorite type of sport. A total of 55% of the males and 30% of the females in the sample report current involvement in intramural sports, and approximately 15% of the males and 10% of the females report being current participants in Division I athletics (See Table 2 for more detail about sports participation).

Insert Table 2

Table 3 displays frequency distributions or means and standard deviations for the study variables. A total of 82% of males' highest level of athletic participation was at the level of "senior in high school" and above. A total of 65% of females report their highest level of participation to be "senior in high school" and above. In regards to competitiveness, men (M = 3.96, SD = .79) report higher levels than women (M = 3.44, SD = .83). In addition, men (M = 3.58, SD = .82), report a higher level of win orientation than women (M = 3.25, SD = .84). Also, men (M = 2.24, SD = .87) report higher levels than women (M = 2.01, SD = .81) for acceptability of violence.

Insert Table 3

Hierarchical Regression

Hierarchical regression analyses were run to examine the cumulative effect of athletic participation, competitiveness, win orientation, and gender on the acceptability of violence in dating relationships (see Table 4). Model 1 shows that athletic participation does not account

for any variance in the acceptability of violence in dating relationships (R^2 = .00, F = 0.62, p = n.s.).

Insert Table 4

When competitiveness and win orientation are added to the regression (Model 2, Table 4) the change in R^2, from .00 to .04, is significant (R^2 Change = .04, F = 14.58, p < .001). With these two variables added to the model the beta for athletic participation in Model 2 (β = -.01, SE = .02, p = n.s.) remains unchanged from Model 1. This is the pattern that would be expected if the contribution of competitiveness and win orientation are independent from the contribution of athletic participation. Betas in Model 2 also indicate that competitiveness is not a significant predictor of the acceptability of violence in dating relationships (β = -.03, SE = .06, p = n.s.). However, betas indicate that win orientation is a significant predictor (β = .23, SE = .06, p < .001). The direction of the relationship shows that as the level of win orientation increases, so does the acceptability of violence in dating relationships.

Model 3 (see Table 4) shows that when gender is added to the regression, although these differences are small, R^2 still increases significantly from .04 to .06 (R^2 Change = .02, F = 8.27, p < .01). The direction of the relationship indicates that males are more likely than females to rate acts of violence in dating relationships to be acceptable (β = -.20, SE = .07, p < .01). Model 3 also shows that while the contribution of athletic participation (β = -.01, SE = .02, p = n.s.) and competitiveness remain nonsignificant (β = -.06, SE = .06, p = n.s.), the influence of win orientation remains significant (β = .24, SE = .06, p < .001).

To explore further the contribution of gender, hierarchical regressions of athletic participation, competitiveness, win orientation and acceptability of dating violence were performed separately for men and women. Model 1 (see Table 5) shows athletic participation explained none of the variance in acceptability of violence for either males (R^2 Change = .00, F = .03, p = n.s.) or females (R^2 Change = .00, F = .00, p = n.s.).

Insert Table 5

The addition of competitiveness and win orientation (Model 2, Table 5) results in a significant increase in the amount of variance explained for acceptability of violence for both males (R^2 Change = .05, F = 6.77, $p < .01$) and females (R^2 Change = .04, F = 7.54, $p < .01$). Betas indicate that competitiveness is not a significant predictor of acceptability of violence for either males (β = -.21, SE = .11, p = n.s.) or females (β = .03, SE = .08, p = n.s.). Win orientation, on the other hand, is a significant predictor of the acceptability of violence in dating relationships. Although the contribution of win orientation to the explanation of acceptability of violence is significant for both genders, betas show the strength of this relationship to be stronger for males (β = .34, SE = .10, $p < .01$) than for females (β = .18, SE = .07, $p < .05$).

Discussion and Conclusions

One of the most important findings of this study is that sports participation is not related to the acceptance of violence in interpersonal relationships. This lack of relationship between sports participation and acceptance of violence holds for both men and women in

this study. This finding suggests that the commonly held belief about the link between sports participation and violent behavior may be incorrect.

Another important finding is that the desire to strive for success is not a significant predictor of acceptability of dating violence, for both males and females. This finding supports hypothesis 2 which states that individuals who are more competitive will not rate acts of violence in dating relationships to be more acceptable than individuals who are less competitive. This finding suggests that the dimension of competitiveness as defined as the desire to strive for success may not influence the acceptance of violence.

The most significant finding of this study is the relationship between win orientation and acceptability of violence. The greater the need to win, whatever the cost, the more acceptable the use of violence. The regression analysis suggests this is true regardless of the level of athletic participation. Thus, it may not be sports participation but rather the need to win that spills over into violence in interpersonal relationships. Rather than being sport context specific, as sport psychologists would argue, the results of this study suggest that the need to win is a personal characteristic, one that may operate to increase the likelihood of violence in a variety of interpersonal situations including interpersonal relationships. Individuals with a high need to win and to avoid losing at all costs may be more likely to resort to violence against others as a means of achieving desired outcomes.

Results also support hypothesis 4, which states that males will rate acts of physical aggression in dating relationships to be more acceptable than will females. This finding is consistent with those of previous studies. However, although significant, gender's contribution to the explanation of dating violence is less than the contribution of the need to

win. These findings suggest the importance of including both men and women in studies involving dating violence.

An important implication of this study is that athletic participation alone may not be a significant influence on individuals' acceptance of dating violence. Rather, it is the need to win. The important question that should be addressed is not whether an individual is participating in sports activities, but how participating in sport activities reflects or fosters the development of an individual's desire to win or avoid losing. The findings of this study suggest that an individual's participation in sports does not necessarily mean that they will possess a win-at-all-costs attitude. They may be involved for the enjoyment of the sport activities and motivated by a desire to do their best. Results of this study indicate that labeling an individual as being more accepting of violence as a result of their athletic participation is an inaccurate generalization.

Results of this study also have implications for understanding what is really spilling over in regards to the spillover theory of violence. Findings in this study suggest that it is not athletic participation, nor even competitiveness expressed as the desire to strive for success. Rather, the findings suggest that it is an individual's desire to win that spillovers over into the acceptance of violence in dating relationships.

Additional studies are needed to explore these ideas further. Such research should include a broader diversity among the participants than was available for this study, predominately white male and female college students in their early twenties. Samples in other studies should be broadened in terms of ethnicity, age, and other demographic characteristics. Attitudes about the acceptability of violence should be gathered from individuals in professional sports in addition to those participating in sports in college and

high school. Although no relationship was found between sports participation and acceptability of violence with high school and college athletes, the environment of professional sports is one that demands a high level of win orientation from athletes. Winning and defeating others is a prerequisite for being successful in their career. As a consequence, those in professional sports may have the highest levels of both the need to win and acceptability of violence in dating relationships.

The development of the need to win also needs focus. Is this attitude fostered by coaches at various levels of athletics? Is it due to socialization processes of an individualistic society in which many activities center on the fact that there must be a winner and a loser? And under what circumstances does the desire to win at all costs become the primary motive, not the desire to strive for success?

In conclusion, findings from this study show that the focus on athletic participation as the predictor of violence outside sports may be too simplistic of an explanation. Instead, attention should focus on competitiveness and its dimensions. A differentiation must be made between competitiveness as a focus on striving to do one's best and competitiveness as a desire to win. Results of this study indicate that the desire of an individual to win in the activities or tasks in which they participate is the dimension that influences the acceptance of violence, not the desire to strive for success.

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of the participants included in the study, by gender

	Male	Female
Age		
17-19	15%	35%
20-21	42%	40%
22-24	38%	22%
25 or older	5%	3%
	(n = 266)	(n = 393)
Year in School		
Freshman	11%	25%
Sophomore	22%	21%
Junior	19%	22%
Senior	48%	32%
	(n = 266)	(n = 393)
Ethnicity		
White-Caucasian	89%	91%
African-American	2%	2%
Asian-American	4%	1%
Hispanic/Latino	--	2%
Other	5%	4%
	(n = 266)	(n = 393)
Birthplace		
Iowa	64%	68%
Midwest other than Iowa	19%	22%
U.S. Other than Midwest	9%	5%
Foreign country	8%	5%
	(n = 265)	(n = 393)
International Student		
No	93%	97%
Yes	7%	3%
	(n = 266)	(n = 392)

Table 1 (continued)

	Male	Female
High School Graduating Class		
50 or less	9%	16%
51-100	25%	19%
101-250	26%	24%
251-350	18%	17%
351 or more	20%	24%
	(n = 266)	(n = 393)
Current Relationship Status		
Not currently dating anyone	42%	36%
Less than 1 year	18%	25%
1-2 years	17%	20%
2 or more years	23%	19%
	(n = 266)	(n = 392)

Table 2

High school and collegiate athletic participation characteristics of the participants in the study, by gender

	Male	Female
Highest grade of high school sport participation		
No participation	11%	19%
Freshman	6%	7%
Sophomore	6%	7%
Junior	7%	9%
Senior	70%	58%
	(n = 266)	(n = 393)
Number of sports participated in during high school		
None	11%	19%
One	20%	21%
Two	22%	21%
Three	23%	20%
Four	17%	12%
Five or more	7%	7%
	(n = 266)	(n = 392)
Favorite type of athletic participation[a]		
No participation	11%	19%
Individual/team sport	35%	40%
Team-only sport	54%	41%
	(n = 266)	(n = 393)
Favorite individual/team sport[b]		
Cross-country	14%	14%
Golf	18%	11%
Gymnastics	2%	4%
Swimming/Diving	9%	16%
Tennis	8%	13%
Track & Field	17%	23%
Wrestling	26%	--
Other	6%	19%
	(n = 94)	(n = 155)

Table 2 (continued)

	Male	Female
Favorite team-only sport[c]		
Baseball	15%	2%
Basketball	25%	20%
Football	39%	--
Hockey	4%	1%
Soccer	14%	19%
Softball	--	19%
Volleyball	3%	32%
Other	1%	7%
	(n = 143)	(n = 163)
Intramural sports participation in college		
Yes	55%	30%
No	45%	70%
	(n = 264)	(n = 393)
Division I sports participant		
Yes	14%	9%
No	86%	91%
	(n = 265)	(n = 392)

[a]A team-only sport does not award individual champions. An individual/team sport is one that awards both individual and team champions.
[b]For those indicating individual/team sport was their favorite kind of sport activity.
[c]For those indicating team-only sport was their favorite type of sport activity.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics for major study variables, by gender

	Male	Female
Level of Athletic Participation		
No participation	8%	15%
Freshman	3%	5%
Sophomore	3%	7%
Junior	4%	8%
Senior	22%	31%
College Intramurals	46%	25%
College Division I	14%	9%
	(n = 266)	(n = 393)
Competitiveness		
Mean	3.96	3.44
Standard Deviation.	.79	.83
	(n = 266)	(n = 393)
Win Orientation		
Mean	3.58	3.25
Standard Deviation	.82	.84
	(n = 266)	(n = 393)
Acceptability of Violence		
Mean	2.24	2.01
Standard Deviation	.87	.81
	(n = 266)	(n = 393)

Table 4

Hierarchical regression of athletic participation, competitiveness, win orientation, and gender on the acceptability of violence in dating relationships

Predictor	*B*	*SE*	R^2	ΔR^2	ΔF
Model 1			.00	.00	0.62
Athletic Participation	.01	.02			
Model 2			.04	.04	14.58***
Athletic Participation	-.01	.02			
Competitiveness	.03	.06			
Win Orientation	.23	.06***			
Model 3			.06	.02	8.27**
Athletic Participation	-.01	.02			
Competitiveness	-.06	.06			
Win Orientation	.24	.06***			
Gender	-.20	.07**			

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 5

Hierarchical regression of athletic participation, competitiveness, and win orientation on the acceptability of violence in dating relationships, by gender

Predictor	Male					Female				
	B	*SE*	R^2	ΔR^2	ΔF	*B*	*SE*	R^2	ΔR^2	ΔF
Model 1			.00	.00	0.03			.00	.00	0.00
Athletic Participation	.01	.03				-.01	.02			
Model 2			.05	.05	6.77**			.04	.04	7.54**
Athletic Participation	.01	.03				-.03	.02			
Competitiveness	-.21	.11				.03	.08			
Win Orientation	.34	.10**				.18	.07*			

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

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CHAPTER III: SUMMARY

Summary

Background

In the two decades following Makepeace's (1981) pioneering work on dating violence, estimates of its prevalence have continued to present a sobering picture of dating and courtship relationships (Neufeld et al., 1999). According to Arias, Samios, and O'Leary (1987), 20 to 66 percent of all college students experience at least one incident of physical violence during a dating relationship.

Several factors that may contribute to the acceptance of dating violence have been examined previously. For instance, situational factors such as response to being humiliated by a partner, retaliation to initial violence from a partner, and self-defense have received extensive focus (O'Keefe, 1997; Foo & Margolin, 1995; Arias & Johnson, 1989). Relationship factors such as the seriousness or importance of the dating relationship, length of the relationship, and family background influences have also received attention (Neufeld et al., 1999; O'Keefe, 1997; Bethke & DeJoy, 1993; Foo & Margolin, 1995; Smith & Williams, 1992).

More recently, studies have examined athletic participation as a factor in the use of violence in contexts other than sports. (Nixon, 1997; Lenzi et al., 1997). A major focus has been on the "spillover theory of violence", which suggests that violence used in sports "spills over" into the interpersonal relationships of the athletes. This theory has been supported in several studies (Bloom & Smith, 1996; Crosset et al., 1996; Crosset, et al., 1995).

Other research suggests that certain factors associated with athletic participation may be more important than athletic participation *per se*. One of the most important of these is competitiveness and its two dimensions: the need to do one's best and the need to win. Confounding these dimensions may lead to inaccurate generalizations regarding competitiveness and the acceptability of violence.

An additional factor that may influence the acceptability of violence in dating relationships is gender. In terms of how others perceive violence, previous studies have shown males to be more accepting of violence than females, both within and outside the sports context. (Conroy, Silva, Newcomer, Walker, & Johnson, 2001; Ellis & Janelle, in press; Foo & Margolin, 1995).

Based on the preceding discussion, the following hypotheses were proposed:

1. Individuals with higher levels of athletic participation will consider acts of physical aggression in dating relationships to be more acceptable than those with lower levels of athletic participation.
2. Individuals who are more competitive will not rate acts of violence in dating relationships to be more acceptable than individuals who are less competitive.
3. Individuals who are highly win-oriented will rate acts of violence in dating relationships to be more acceptable than individuals who are less win oriented.
4. Males will rate acts of physical aggression in dating relationships to be more acceptable than females.

Method

The sample consisted of 266 male and 393 female undergraduate students at a large public university in the Midwestern United States. Students enrolled in any one of three

classes in the human development and family studies department or one course in agronomy completed a 51-item questionnaire regarding attitudes about the acceptability of violence in dating and marital relationships, and attitudes about competitiveness and about the desire to win. The acceptability of violence was assessed using a series of 18 vignettes depicting violence in dating relationships. An individual's level of competitiveness and win orientation was assessed using Gill and Deeter's (1988) Sport Orientation Questionnaire.

Results and Conclusions

One of the most important findings of this study is that sports participation is not related to the acceptance of violence in interpersonal relationships. This lack of relationship between sports participation and acceptance of violence holds for both men and women. This finding suggests that the commonly held belief about the link between sports participation and violent behavior may be incorrect.

Another important finding is that the desire to strive for success is not a significant predictor of acceptability of dating violence, for both males and females. This finding supports hypothesis 2 which states that individuals who are more competitive will not rate acts of violence in dating relationships to be more acceptable than individuals who are less competitive. This finding suggests that the dimension of competitiveness as defined as the desire to strive for success may not influence the acceptance of violence.

The most significant finding of this study is the strong relationship between win orientation and acceptability of violence. The greater the need to win, the more acceptable the use of violence. The regression analysis suggests this is true regardless of the level of athletic participation. Thus, it may not be sports participation but rather the need to win that spills over into violence in interpersonal relationships. Rather than being sport context

specific, as sport psychologists would argue, the results of this study suggest that the need to win is a personal characteristic, one that may operate to increase the likelihood of violence in a variety of interpersonal situations including interpersonal relationships. Individuals with a high need to win and to avoid losing at all costs may be more likely to resort to violence against others as a means of achieving desired outcomes.

Results also support hypothesis 4, which states that males will rate acts of physical aggression in dating relationships to be more acceptable than will females. This finding is consistent with those of previous studies. However, although significant, gender's contribution to the explanation of dating violence is less than the contribution of the need to win. These findings suggest the importance of including both men and women in studies involving dating violence.

In conclusion, findings from this study show that the focus on athletic participation as the predictor of violence outside sports may be too simplistic of an explanation. Instead, attention should focus on competitiveness and its dimensions. A differentiation must be made between competitiveness as a focus on striving to do one's best and competitiveness as a desire to win. Results of this study indicate that the desire of an individual to win in the activities or tasks in which they participate is the dimension that influences the acceptance of violence, not the desire to strive for success.

Implications

An important implication of this study is that athletic participation alone may not be a significant influence on individuals' acceptance of dating violence. Rather, it is the need to win. The important question that should be addressed is not whether an individual is participating in sports activities, but how participating in sport activities reflects or fosters the

development of an individual's desire to win or avoid losing. The findings of this study suggest that an individual's participation in sports does not necessarily mean that they will possess a win-at-all-costs attitude. They may be involved for the enjoyment of the sport activities and motivated by a desire to do their best. Results of this study suggest that labeling an individual as being more accepting of violence as a result of their athletic participation is an inaccurate generalization.

Results of this study also have implications for understanding what is really spilling over in regards to the spillover theory of violence. Findings in this study suggest that it is not athletic participation, nor even competitiveness expressed as the desire to strive for success. Rather, the findings suggest that it is an individual's desire to win that spillovers over into the acceptance of violence in dating relationships. Additional studies are needed to explore these ideas further.

Limitations

This research should include a broader diversity among the participants than was available for this study, predominately white male and female college students in their early twenties. Samples in other studies should be broadened in terms of ethnicity, age, and other demographic characteristics. Attitudes about the acceptability of violence should be gathered from individuals in professional sports in addition to those participating in sports in college and high school. Although no relationship was found between sports participation and acceptability of violence with high school and college athletes, the environment of professional sports is one that demands a high level of win orientation from athletes. Winning and defeating others is a prerequisite for being successful in their career. As a

consequence, those in professional sports may have the highest levels of both the need to win and acceptability of violence in dating relationships.

The development of the need to win also needs focus. Is this attitude fostered by coaches at various levels of athletics? Is it due to socialization processes of an individualistic society in which many activities center on the fact that there must be a winner and a loser? And under what circumstances does the desire to win at all costs become the primary motive, not the desire to strive for success?

In conclusion, this study has shown that the desire to win is a significant predictor of the acceptability of violence. The influence of the desire to win is almost identical for both men and women. These findings demonstrate the importance of including both genders in future studies involving the acceptance of violence.

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Appendix A

Human Subjects Approval

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Human Subjects Research Office
221 Beardshear Hall
Ames, IA 50011
515/294-4566
FAX: 515/294-8000

DATE: February 26, 2001

TO: Michael Merten

FROM: Janell Meldrem, IRB Administrator

RE: "Sports participation and the acceptability of dating violence" IRB ID 01-398

TYPE OF APPLICATION: ☒ New Project ☐ Continuing Review ☐ Modification

The project, "Sports participation and the acceptability of dating violence" has been approved for one year from its IRB approval date February 23, 2001. University policy and Federal regulations (45 CFR 46) require that all research involving human subjects be reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) on a continuing basis at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but at least once per year.

Any modification of this research project must be submitted to the IRB for prior review and approval. Modifications include but are not limited to: changing the protocol or study procedures, changing investigators or sponsors (funding sources), changing the Informed Consent Document, an increase in the total number of subjects anticipated, or adding new materials (e.g., letters, advertisements, questionnaires).

You must promptly report any of the following to the IRB: (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

You are expected to make sure that all key personnel who are involved in human subjects research complete training prior to their interactions with human subjects. Web based training is available from our web site.

Ten months from the IRB approval, you will receive a letter notifying you that the expiration date is approaching. At that time, you will need to fill out a Continuing Review Form and return it to the Human Subjects Research Office. If the project is, or will be finished in one year, you will need to fill out a Project Closure Form to officially end the project.

Both of these forms are on the Human Subjects Research Office web site at:
http://grants-svr.admin.iastate.edu/VPR/humansubjects.html.

Iowa State University Human Subjects Review Form

OFFICE USE ONLY 54
EXPEDITED X FULL COMMITTEE ___ D# [illegible]

PI Name Michael Merten Title Sports participation and the acceptability of dating violence

Checklist for Attachments

The following are attached (please check):

13. ☒ Letter or written statement to subjects indicating clearly:
    a) the purpose of the research
    b) the use of any identifier codes (names, #'s), how they will be used, and when they will be removed (see item 18)
    c) an estimate of time needed for participation in the research
    d) if applicable, the location of the research activity
    e) how you will ensure confidentiality
    f) in a longitudinal study, when and how you will contact subjects later
    g) that participation is voluntary; nonparticipation will not affect evaluations of the subject
14. ☒ A copy of the consent form (if applicable)
15. ☐ Letter of approval for research from cooperating organizations or institutions (if applicable)
16. ☒ Data-gathering instruments

17. Anticipated dates for contact with subjects:

First contact	Last contact
02/22/01	03/15/01
Month/Day/Year	Month/Day/Year

18. If applicable: anticipated date that identifiers will be removed from completed survey instruments and/or audio or visual tapes will be erased:

    Month/Day/Year

19. Signature of Departmental Executive Officer [M. Mac Donald] Date 2-12-01 Department or Administrative Unit HDFS

20. Initial action by the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

    ☐ Project approved ☐ Pending Further Review _____ Date ☐ Project not approved _____ Date

    ☐ No action required _____ Date

21. Follow-up action by the IRB:

    Project approved ☒ Project not approved _____ Date Project not resubmitted _____ Date

Patricia M. Keith 2-23-01 [Patricia M Keith]
Name of IRB Chairperson Approval Date Signature of IRB Chairperson

Appendix B

Modified Informed Consent Form

Modified Informed Consent

This study is being conducted to help us learn more about sports involvement and conflict in intimate interpersonal relationships.

When completing this survey, please keep in mind the following:

♦ Your answers are strictly voluntary. At any time you may wish to stop, feel free to do so. If you are uncomfortable answering any of the questions, you are entitled not to answer them. If you choose not to participate in this survey, no punishment or recourse will be directed towards you.

♦ Your answers are confidential. With that in mind, your complete and honest answers are very important to this project. Your name and social security number will be written on a pink bubble sheet to ensure that you receive extra credit for your participation. This pink bubble sheet will be turned in separately from the surveys to keep your survey responses confidential. The answer sheets for the survey will not contain any personal information about you that can link your answers to your identity.

♦ The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Please take your time in answering each question as honestly as possible. Thank You.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Michael Merten
219 MacKay Hall
(515) 294-3024
mertenmj@isunet.net

Dr. Craig Allen
2364 Palmer
(515) 294-6317
callen@iastate.edu

Appendix C

Questionnaire

Sport Attitude Questionnaire

1. Gender:

   a) Male
   b) Female

2. Age:

   a) 17
   b) 18
   c) 19
   d) 20
   e) 21
   f) 22
   g) 23
   h) 24
   i) 25-30
   j) Older than 30

3. Current year in school:

   a) Freshman
   b) Sophomore
   c) Junior
   d) Senior
   e) Other

4. Ethnic background (please check one):

   a) White Caucasian
   b) African-American
   c) Asian-American
   d) Hispanic/Latino
   e) Native American
   f) Mixed Ethnicity
   g) Other

5. Where were you born?

   a) Iowa
   b) Midwest other than Iowa
   c) United States other than Midwest
   d) English-speaking foreign country
   e) Non-English-speaking foreign country
   f) Other

6. What was the size of your high school graduating class?

   a) Less than 25
   b) 26-50
   c) 51-100
   d) 101-150
   e) 151-250
   f) 251-350
   g) 351-500
   h) 501-750
   i) 751-1000
   j) More than 1000

7. Are you an International Student?

   a) Yes
   b) No

8. What is the length of your current dating or marital relationship?

   a) Not currently dating anyone
   b) 1 month
   c) 2-3 months
   d) 3-6 months
   e) 6-12 months
   f) 1-2 years
   g) 2-5 years
   h) 5-10 years
   i) 10 or more years

Vignette Set #1

The following vignettes depict events between partners who are dating. Please read each vignette and indicate how acceptable you believe each response to be. Mark the corresponding letter on your answer sheet that has the appropriate number in the circle that is closest to your belief.

9. **Rebecca** kicked John in the stomach after he shoved her away during a dispute over where they were going to spend Thanksgiving.

   How acceptable is **Rebecca's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
   Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

10. **Dan** kicked Amanda in the stomach after she walked over and punched him in the arm. She had just overheard his conversation on the telephone with his best friend.

    How acceptable is **Dan's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

11. **Adam** pushed Sara away when she yelled at him about his new job hours.

    How acceptable is **Adam's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

12. **Jennifer** turned around and punched Brian in the arm after he hit her in the back when he realized the keys were locked in the car.

    How acceptable is **Jennifer's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

13. **Amy** hit Jason in the back when he yelled at her about the way she was acting at the party.

    How acceptable is **Amy's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

14. **James** got up and punched Melissa in the arm after she pushed him into the chair following his comments about one of her friends.

    How acceptable is **James's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable ... Totally Unacceptable

15. **Kevin** pushed Julie away after she walked over and punched him in the arm during a recent disagreement.

    How acceptable is **Kevin's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable ... Totally Unacceptable

16. **Lisa** shoved Matt after he pushed her away while the two were arguing about the cost of the trip.

    How acceptable is **Lisa's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable ... Totally Unacceptable

17. **Josh** punched Heather in the face while she was yelling at him about his recent behavior.

    How acceptable is **Josh's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable ... Totally Unacceptable

You have just answered questions regarding partners who are dating. Please answer the following questions regarding partners who are married.

---

18. There are situations in which I would approve of a husband slapping his wife's face.

    1 2 3 4 5 6
    Strongly Agree ... Strongly Disagree

19. There are situations in which I would approve of a wife slapping her husband's face.

    1 2 3 4 5 6
    Strongly Agree ... Strongly Disagree

Vignette Set #2

The following vignettes depict events between partners who are dating. Please read each vignette and indicate how acceptable you believe each response to be. Mark the corresponding letter on your answer sheet that has the appropriate number in the circle that is closest to your belief.

9. **Jason** hit Amy in the back when she yelled at him about the way he was acting at the party.

   How acceptable is **Jason's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
   Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

10. **Amanda** kicked Dan in the stomach after he walked over and punched her in the arm. He had just overheard her conversation on the telephone with her best friend.

    How acceptable is **Amanda's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

11. **Julie** pushed Kevin away after he walked over and punched her in the arm during a recent disagreement.

    How acceptable is **Julie's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

12. **John** kicked Rebecca in the stomach after she shoved him away during a dispute over where they were going to spend Thanksgiving.

    How acceptable is **John's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

13. **Brian** turned around and punched Jennifer in the arm after she hit him in the back when she realized the keys were locked in the car.

    How acceptable is **Brian's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

14. **Heather** punched Josh in the face while he was yelling at her about her recent behavior.

How acceptable is **Heather's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

15. **Sara** pushed Adam away when he yelled at her about her new job hours.

How acceptable is **Sara's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

16. **Melissa** got up and punched James in the arm after he pushed her into the chair following her comments about one of his friends.

How acceptable is **Melissa's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

17. **Matt** shoved Lisa after she pushed him away while the two were arguing about the cost of the trip.

How acceptable is **Matt's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

You have just answered questions regarding partners who are dating. Please answer the following questions regarding partners who are married.

---

18. There are situations in which I would approve of a husband slapping his wife's face.

1 2 3 4 5 6
Strongly Agree — Strongly Disagree

19. There are situations in which I would approve of a wife slapping her husband's face.

1 2 3 4 5 6
Strongly Agree — Strongly Disagree

Vignette Set #3

The following vignettes depict events between partners who are dating. Please read each vignette and indicate how acceptable you believe each response to be. Mark the corresponding letter on your answer sheet that has the appropriate number in the circle that is closest to your belief.

9. **John** kicked Rebecca in the stomach after she shoved him away during a dispute over where they were going to spend Thanksgiving.

   How acceptable is **John's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
   Totally Acceptable ... Totally Unacceptable

10. **Amanda** kicked Dan in the stomach after he walked over and punched her in the arm. He had just overheard her conversation on the telephone with her best friend.

    How acceptable is **Amanda's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable ... Totally Unacceptable

11. **Matt** shoved Lisa after she pushed him away while the two were arguing about the cost of the trip.

    How acceptable is **Matt's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable ... Totally Unacceptable

12. **Jason** hit Amy in the back when she yelled at him about the way he was acting at the party.

    How acceptable is **Jason's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable ... Totally Unacceptable

13. **Heather** punched Josh in the face while he was yelling at her about her recent behavior.

    How acceptable is **Heather's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable ... Totally Unacceptable

14. **Sara** pushed Adam away when he yelled at her about her new job hours.

How acceptable is **Sara's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

15. **James** got up and punched Melissa in the arm after she pushed him into the chair following his comments about one of her friends.

How acceptable is **James's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

16. **Brian** turned around and punched Jennifer in the arm after she hit him in the back when she realized the keys were locked in the car.

How acceptable is **Brian's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

17. **Julie** pushed Kevin away after he walked over and punched her in the arm during a recent disagreement.

How acceptable is **Julie's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

You have just answered questions regarding partners who are dating. Please answer the following questions regarding partners who are married.

---

18. There are situations in which I would approve of a husband slapping his wife's face.

1 2 3 4 5 6
Strongly Agree — Strongly Disagree

19. There are situations in which I would approve of a wife slapping her husband's face.

1 2 3 4 5 6
Strongly Agree — Strongly Disagree

Vignette Set #4

The following vignettes depict events between partners who are dating. Please read each vignette and indicate how acceptable you believe each response to be. Mark the corresponding letter on your answer sheet that has the appropriate number in the circle that is closest to your belief.

9. **Kevin** pushed Julie away after she walked over and punched him in the arm during a recent disagreement.

   How acceptable is **Kevin's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
   Totally Acceptable ... Totally Unacceptable

10. **Melissa** got up and punched James in the arm after he pushed her into the chair following her comments about one of his friends.

    How acceptable is **Melissa's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable ... Totally Unacceptable

11. **Rebecca** kicked John in the stomach after he shoved her away during a dispute over where they were going to spend Thanksgiving.

    How acceptable is **Rebecca's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable ... Totally Unacceptable

12. **Josh** punched Heather in the face while she was yelling at him about his recent behavior.

    How acceptable is **Josh's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable ... Totally Unacceptable

13. **Dan** kicked Amanda in the stomach after she walked over and punched him in the arm. She had just overheard his conversation on the telephone with his best friend.

    How acceptable is **Dan's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    Totally Acceptable ... Totally Unacceptable

14. **Amy** hit Jason in the back when he yelled at her about the way she was acting at the party.

How acceptable is **Amy's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

15. **Adam** pushed Sara away when she yelled at him about his new job hours.

How acceptable is **Adam's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

16. **Jennifer** turned around and punched Brian in the arm after he hit her in the back when he realized the keys were locked in the car.

How acceptable is **Jennifer's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

17. **Lisa** shoved Matt after he pushed her away while the two were arguing about the cost of the trip.

How acceptable is **Lisa's** response? 1 2 3 4 5 6
Totally Acceptable — Totally Unacceptable

You have just answered questions regarding partners who are dating. Please answer the following questions regarding partners who are married.

---

18. There are situations in which I would approve of a husband slapping his wife's face.

1 2 3 4 5 6
Strongly Agree — Strongly Disagree

19. There are situations in which I would approve of a wife slapping her husband's face.

1 2 3 4 5 6
Strongly Agree — Strongly Disagree

Read each statement and mark the corresponding letter on your answer sheet that indicates how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Choose the letter that describes how you *usually* feel about sports and competition.

	Strongly Agree	Slightly Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
20. I am a determined competitor.	A	B	C	D	E
21. Winning is important.	A	B	C	D	E
22. I am a competitive person.	A	B	C	D	E
23. I set goals for myself when I compete.	A	B	C	D	E
24. I try my hardest to win.	A	B	C	D	E
25. Scoring more points than my opponent is very important to me.	A	B	C	D	E
26. I look forward to competing.	A	B	C	D	E
27. I am most competitive when I try to achieve personal goals.	A	B	C	D	E
28. I enjoy competing against others.	A	B	C	D	E
29. I hate to lose.	A	B	C	D	E
30. I thrive on competition.	A	B	C	D	E
31. I try hardest when I have a specific goal.	A	B	C	D	E
32. My goal is to be the best competitor possible.	A	B	C	D	E
33. The only time I am satisfied is when I win.	A	B	C	D	E
34. I want to be successful in competitive activities.	A	B	C	D	E
35. Performing to the best of my ability is very important to me.	A	B	C	D	E
36. I work hard to be successful in competitive activities.	A	B	C	D	E
37. Losing upsets me.	A	B	C	D	E
38. The best test of my ability is competing against others.	A	B	C	D	E
39. Reaching personal performance goals is very important to me.	A	B	C	D	E
40. I look forward to the opportunity to test my skills in competition.	A	B	C	D	E
41. I have the most fun when I win.	A	B	C	D	E
42. I perform my best when I am competing against an opponent.	A	B	C	D	E
43. The best way to determine my ability is to set a goal and try to reach it.	A	B	C	D	E
44. I want to be the best every time I compete.	A	B	C	D	E

45. What was your highest grade level of sports participation in **high school**?

a) No participation
b) Freshman
c) Sophomore
d) Junior
e) Senior

46. How many different **high school sports** did you participate in while you were in high school?

a) None (go to Question 50).
b) 1
c) 2
d) 3
e) 4
f) 5
g) 6 or more

47. If you participated in high school sports, was your favorite sport strictly a team sport, or was it a combination individual/team sport?

a) Strictly a team sport (go to question 48)
b) A combination individual/team sport (go to question 49)

48. If your favorite sport was strictly a team sport, please choose your ONE most favorite (then go to Question 50)

a) Baseball
b) Basketball
c) Football
d) Hockey
e) Soccer
f) Softball
g) Volleyball
h) Other

49. If your favorite sport was a combination individual/team sport, please choose your ONE most favorite.

a) Cross-Country
b) Golf
c) Gymnastics
d) Swimming/Diving
e) Tennis
f) Track and Field
g) Wrestling
h) Other

50. Do you currently participate in intramural athletics at Iowa State?

a) Yes
b) No

51. Do you currently participate in a Division I or Club-sponsored sport(s) at Iowa State.

a) Yes
b) No